

talked about reining her in—that she needs to only speak for the administration.

The President. I just don't agree with that position. When you have someone as outspoken and energetic as she is, there's going to be times when she'll be outspoken and energetic in a way that I don't necessarily agree with.

Q. Is she allowed to disagree with you?

The President. But I certainly stand behind her foursquare as Surgeon General. I think she's done a good job, and she's beginning to really focus the country on a lot of these public health problems. So, she needs to make it very clear that—and I think she did, to be fair—that I just disagree with that. I have thought about it a lot, and I think the cost of legalizing drugs would far outweigh the benefits. But I think the fact that everybody in America feels overwhelmed and determined to do something about crime and violence and drugs and gangs is a very positive thing. So we'll just go from here.

President's Health

Q. Mr. President, how's your back?

The President. Much better, thank you. It just happens every couple of years. I wait for it to heal up, and I go back to running. It's fine.

NOTE: The exchange began at 2:11 p.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Mayors and Chiefs of Police on Violent Crime

December 9, 1993

Thank you, Mayor Abramson, and thank all of the rest of you for coming here. I have looked forward to this meeting and to receiving this plan ever since the first discussion we held.

I believe that this Nation is really prepared in a way that it has not been before, at least in my experience, to do something about violent crime, to do something about all of its causes, and to try to come together across the lines of region and party and the size of the units in which we live to deal with these things that are tearing the heart out of our country. I think the rapid change of

opinion and movement on the Brady bill at the end of the last session is an example of that. I think the size of the margin by which Senator Feinstein's amendment was added to the crime bill in the Senate to ban 35 kinds of assault weapons was evidence of that. And so I think we are prepared to begin.

I would just like to make a couple of points, and then I came here, I'm sure along with the Attorney General and FBI Director and Dr. Brown, our Director of Drug Control Policy, as much to listen as to talk. I want to listen to you. But I would like to just put a few things on the table.

The first thing is that it is important that we get a good crime bill out early when the Congress comes back. And we'd like your help in defining what that is. The Senate and the House versions are different. The most clearly manifest difference is that the Senate version has more money in it and therefore would enable us to fund in this crime bill the full 100,000 extra police officers that I have supported since I began running for President.

As you point out in your report, it will take some time to train and deploy those people, but I know that it makes a difference. I think the margin of Mayor Lanier's reelection is evidence that people know that if you properly deploy trained personnel, it just doesn't serve to catch criminals quicker, but because of the relationships they develop in the community and their visibility, it actually reduces crime. I think there should be some alternative punishment for youthful offenders, boot camps and perhaps other things. I think that is very important.

Beyond that, we ought to talk about what else we do and where we go. But I want to emphasize that even with intense commitment in this city, you have to do the things that are before you. You have to get done what you can do at the moment and then move on to what's next on the agenda. So I think it is imperative that we move on the crime bill and the 100,000 police officers in the street and the boot camps as soon as we can when the Congress comes back.

I also think we ought to recognize that we don't have all the money in the world, and we don't want to spend a lot of money on

things that will be of marginal significance. I was glad to see you advocating in this paper—I've just been skimming it over—that we ought to give attention to drug treatment as well as drug enforcement, that we needed to deal with supply and demand in an even-handed way. We need some more investment to do that.

The last point I want to make is that this is the first step, but only the first step we have to take in restoring the conditions of civilized life to a lot of our cities. The reason a lot of these things are happening is that there has been a simultaneous decline of work, family, and community, the things that really organize life for all the rest of us. And we are going to have to rebuild them all. And it is not going to happen overnight, because these deteriorations have happened over a period of decades. But people can sense whether you are going in the right direction or the wrong direction, and I think we have to work together to change the direction. I am confident that we can. There are also maybe some things we can do administratively. And you have the people here who want to hear from you about that, and we want to go forward with that.

And finally let me say I think we ought to set up an ongoing relationship so that you can continue to work with us, get input, and help us to work through some of the difficult decisions that are always required when you move from the level of speaking to doing. And so we'd like very much to have, Mayor, some sort of ongoing mechanism that this administration can relate to from the membership of this group.

Lastly, let me say that I'm grateful for the participation here, not just of the mayors but of the several police chiefs. It's good to see all of you here. I think we can do something. I think the American people are tired of hurting and tired of feeling insecure and tired of the violence, and it makes such a huge gap between what we say and what we do and how we want to live and how we are forced to live. And it's affected now so many more people beyond the immediate victims of crime. It's changing everyone's life in ways that are quite destructive. We have to move. And I think we're prepared to move. And

I think with this document, you've given us a good basis to begin.

I thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:41 a.m. in the Indian Treaty Room at the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Jerry Abramson of Louisville, KY, president, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and Mayor Bob Lanier of Houston, TX.

Remarks on Conversion of the Federal Fleet to Alternative Fuel Vehicles

December 9, 1993

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you, Mr. Vice President and Secretary O'Leary and my longtime friend Garry Mauro.

I want to thank this task force for a job well done. I'd be remiss if I didn't ask the members of the task force who are here just to stand so we can be recognized. If you served on the task force, please stand up. [Applause] Thank you.

I also know that we had about 250 others, many of whom are in this room, who worked on the various subgroups of this task force. And I thank all of you. I thank Garry Mauro, the Texas land commissioner who has been my friend for more than 20 years, for his backbreaking work on this. I also want to thank the staff director, Tom Henderson, who is over here, who worked so hard on it. Thank you, Tom, for your work. Stand up. [Applause] Thank you. I thank Susan Tierney. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Hazel O'Leary for the statement she just made. One of my better predecessors, Harry Truman, once said that his job consisted largely of trying to talk people into doing what they ought to do without his having to ask them in the first place. [Laughter] So I didn't even have to ask her to comply. She has removed a major part of my job. But I thank her for that.

Today I am directing the White House Office on Environmental Policy, headed by Katie McGinty, to cooperate with the Department of Energy in their ongoing programs to put these recommendations into ac-